No one knows...

These editorial notes are being written the very day of the opening of the trial of Louisa Hanoune at the military tribunal of Blida. No one knows the conclusions of this trial will be when this issue of *La Vérité* will be published. No one knows what the developments will be on the international level and in Algeria.

Faced with the revolutionary mobilisation in Algeria since 22 February, after all sorts of manoeuvres, to maintain itself, the regime attempts to force its way through. Despite the rejection by the Algerian people, who express themselves in the form “No election with the band!” it has decided that the presidential election will take place on 12 December.

This attempt is accompanied by an increasingly massive use of repression. Many well-known activists of the popular mobilisation have been interpellated and incarcerated. The police presence is quite significant, trying to stop the processions from forming. Friday 20 September, a further step was taken, since, on orders from the chief of staff, the gendarmerie sealed off all access to Algiers in order the stop the demonstrators from other towns from reaching the city centre.

In a situation of general crisis of the regime, they have no other path than to go further forward in the attempt to impose this election. But, this Friday 20 September, the mobilisation was even more powerful than in preceding weeks. There were, as usual, slogans against the regime, for the release of the political prisoners and, above all, a demand massively repeated: no election with the band!

This is a revolutionary mobilisation which, obviously, poses all the democratic demands, but which is combined with economic and social demands. A great many mobilisations, in different departments of the country, see the population bar the roads in relation to the questions of water, of electricity, of housing, of unemployment…

Since 2015, the pauperisation of the population has particularly developed, while the regime proceeds with counter-reforms calling into question what had been won by the working population in the first years of the 21st century. And this regime that seeks to maintain itself continues and aggravates this policy. The interim president, Bensalah, has ordered his Prime Minister to prepare a strict budget for 2020, which is in discussion in this illegitimate parliament rejected by the mass of the population.

This draft budget, beyond the drastic cuts in state public spending, foresees the elimination of the article 49-51 (read below), except for the strategic sectors. Remember that in the 1990s, the policy of submission to the IMF led to the closing of 1,500 public enterprises with, as a result, hundreds of thousands of workers being thrown into unemployment.

After the end of the horrible war of decomposition of the 1990s and the re-establishment of peace, the class struggle resumed: numerous strikes called by union organisations, as well as the Workers’ Party’s fight for the re-nationalisations, expressing the rising anger in the people. Faced with this situation, the regime had to propose passing a law on the control of foreign investments. A foreign investor could not possess more than 49% of the shares and 51% had to be Algerian.

Louisa Hanoune and the Workers’ Party MPs explained that, for them, it should be 100% public, but that, despite everything, they would vote for this 49-51 law to inhibit the penetration of foreign capital into Algeria.

The suppression of the 49-51 article shows the true nature of this regime, which opens the way for the penetration of finance capital, speculation and pillage. It is furthermore illustrative that an IMF delegation had gone to Algeria.
The fight of the Workers’ Party

In this situation, the Workers’ Party has published a statement (excerpts):

(...) The Workers’ Party has always militated for the Algerian nation’s sovereignty, for the sovereignty of every nation and people oppressed by imperialism, and has unceasingly worked to organise the defence of this sovereignty particularly by holding several international conferences precisely here in Algeria. The Workers’ Party considers the coming of the IMF delegation into our country at this very moment as intolerable interference.

The Workers’ Party believes that no Algerian committed to our nation’s sovereignty can accept that the experts of this institution, who has imposed murderous plans that have bankrupted many countries around the world, leading some of them to dismantlement, come in and dictate their economic guidelines and reforms to us. (...)

Neither the IMF, nor the World Bank, nor the WTO, nor any partnership agreement with the European Union: our economic policy must be exclusively Algerian. This simply means policies attuned to the aspirations of the majority of the Algerian people. And policies attuned to the aspirations of the Algerian people are contradictory to the guidelines recently given by the head of state to the head of government (...). Economic austerity, controlled public spending and reduced budget deficit, as advocated by Ben Salah, is proper to the policies recommended by the IMF who is about to send its experts to our country. (...)

It is to put an end to this situation of bad life that the people rebelled on February 22nd, and that despite threats, repression, political manoeuvres ..., it has maintained its mobilisation as the only way out to fight the system who is the only one responsible of the situation.

To protect the nation, to defend Algeria’s unity, independence and sovereignty, the people must be given voice to define for itself, in complete freedom and democracy, the nature and form of the institutions to be set up through a sovereign Constituent assembly.

The Permanent secretariat of the Political bureau Algiers, 4 September 2019

The manoeuvres multiply. On one hand, there is a grouping of opposition parties – which calls itself the “Forces for change” – that is for the presidential election, including Benflis, a former Prime Minister of Bouteflika, who, it seems, is readying to submit his candidacy. On the other is the Pact for the democratic alternative, which groups together seven parties (including the FFS, the RCD and the Workers’ Party), the Human Rights League and several associations and personalities.

In the founding pact of the Democratic Alternative, one can read:

Political Pact for a democratic transition and a sovereign constituent process (excerpts)

The Forces of the democratic alternative, in accordance with the revolutionary process led by the majority of the people, remark that at the moment when the de facto power evokes a simulacrum of dialog with the aim of imposing a presidential election, synonym for the maintaining of the system, tens of citizens are still being detained arbitrarily for their opinions or political positions; the freedoms of expression and movement are called into question, the private and public media are subjected to the injunctions of those in political power.

The Forces of the democratic alternative reiterate their refusal of the agenda of the presidential election that those in de facto power want to impose, this in symbiosis with the fierce will expressed by the Algerian people for a radical democratic change consecrating their full sovereignty, while those in power make every effort to maintain the system by trying to force it through. This is illustrated by the speech by the National People’s Armed Forces chief of staff, given from the barracks, marked with threats and accusations of treason against those who defend the option of full and complete popular sovereignty through the intermediary of a transitory democratic sovereign process, which will culminate in a sovereign constituent process which will dismantle the current system/regime and thus lay the foundations for a new republic, guaranteeing all the rights and freedoms.

The demand for change toward a state under the rule of law, founded on a democratic legitimacy based on the sovereignty of the people, requires a new political climate that is incompatible with the proposals by those currently in power and calls for the immediate opening of a phase of democratic transition in which state affairs will be led in a new spirit through a sovereign constituent process, adjusted to the democratic and social aspirations of the Algerian people. The departure of the regime and its symbols will be the first indicator for going forward in the new phase.

The Algerian people refuse to build the new out of the old and refuse to associate those whose hands are stained with the blood of Algerians or who have been responsible for or complicit in the repression and corruption. (...)

By adopting a solution of rupture with the system, the Forces of the democratic alternative renew their attachment to the political pact adopted 26 June 2019 and open to the realisation of a sovereign constituent process for a republic consecrating:

- national unity and sovereignty;
- the refusal of all forms of foreign interference;
- all the individual and collective freedoms, including union freedoms and the right to strike, freedom of expression, organisation, demonstration, religion, conscience, etc.;
- the respect of human rights and the international conventions that consecrate them;
- the separation of and balance between the powers that make up the foundation of a state under the rule of law.
- effective independence of the justice system;
- the non-utilisation of violence to gain, exert or keep power;
- free, honest and transparent elections;
- the adoption of the declarative system for the creation of associations, unions or parties;
- the revocability of elected officials at all level by their constituents;

The demand for change toward a state under the rule of law, founded on a democratic legitimacy based on the sovereignty of the people, requires a new political climate that is incompatible with the proposals by those currently in power and calls for the immediate opening of a phase of democratic transition in which state affairs will be led in a new spirit through a sovereign constituent process, adjusted to the democratic and social aspirations of the Algerian people. The departure of the regime and its symbols will be the first indicator for going forward in the new phase.

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- the adoption of the declarative system for the creation of associations, unions or parties;
- the revocability of elected officials at all level by their constituents;
– the effective guarantee by the state of the social and economic rights of the citizens;
– the people’s sovereignty over the country’s wealth;
– the confiscation of the stolen public property;
– the role of the state in the management of the national development, in the eradication of poverty, in the struggle against the social and economic inequalities and the regional disparities;
– The equal rights of all Algerians, notably between men and women before the law, as well as the repeal of all the segregationist laws;
– effective equality between the two official national languages (Arab and Tamazight).

(...) We, Forces of the democratic alternative, launch a call to all Algerian men and women to engage in a sovereign constituent process through self-organisation in grassroots committees and structures on the national scale, with the objective of giving a voice to the people for them to be able to freely choose the form and content of the institutions to be put into place and which they deem able to respond to their demands and expectations in all domains.

This grouping is not a new party. It is an agreement between different parties on the following bases: the rejection of the regime and the refusal of a presidential election; a democratic transition through a constituent process. It is furthermore significant that the regime and its agents focus their attacks on the Pact for the democratic alternative. Several regime spokespeople, including the general staff, have denounced those who refuse the presidential election as traitors to the nation, threatening them with judicial proceedings. This framework of unity that the Pact for the democratic alternative makes up in, in effect, a pole that refuses to support the regime in any way whatsoever.

Of course, for the Workers’ Party, the refusal of the presidential election, the departure of the regime and the constituent process mean giving the say to the people to define the content and form of the new institutions, thus raising the question of the Constituent Assembly. Since its founding, the Workers’ Party has fought for this demand – see the article “30 years of the fight of the Workers’ Party” in n° 102 of La Vérité (June 2019).

In the preceding issue of La Vérité, the editorial notes were titled: “We know neither the day nor the hour...” Indeed, the revolutionary surge in Algeria, that no one had seen coming, has a world-wide importance. It is the expression of the fact that at any moment revolutionary explosions could happen on every continent. The imperialist governments are seized with panic, faced with the developments in Algeria and the consequences in the region and on the international scale. The presidential election that was held in mid-September in Tunisia also expressed this rejection and this will to be rid of all the forces attached to the imperialist order. 55% of Tunisians abstained, and those who went to vote did so for two candidates who were presented as anti-system: one, a billionaire, who is in prison for tax fraud, the other, a university professor specialised in law. The two big parties, one secular, one Islamist, that have led the country since the fall of Ben Ali were crushed. The Tunisian masses thus reject all those who have confiscated the revolution after the fall of Ben Ali.

**We know neither the day nor the hour...**

All these developments are the expression of a world situation that is toppling. “We know neither the day nor the hour...”: this is the mass movement that has erupted up in Hong Kong, attracting over the weeks millions of inhabitants of this city against the decision taken to promulgate a law of extradition to mainland China. After weeks and weeks of repression and threats, the Chinese bureaucracy had to pull back and cancel this measure. But the popular mobilisation continues, because it has put forward five demands and only one is satisfied.

This retreat of the Chinese bureaucracy is historic. It indicates the terror of the bureaucracy, faced with a possible revolutionary irruption in mainland China itself. In effect, there are, on the level of enterprises or on the local level, strikes, notably on the question of par. The Chinese bureaucracy is caught between the pressure from the United States and the resistance of the masses. The trade war unleashed by Donald Trump against China further sharpens the crisis of the Chinese bureaucracy. But, at the same time, this trade war threatens all the relations in the world market. The trade by China in industrial production, notably for big European or American groups, underlines the impossibility of going without China, but also underlines the bureaucracy’s dependence on the world market.

This offensive by Trump does not only concern China. It is also an offensive against Europe and its different states (see below – Europe – “Riots to be feared”, p. 27). It is the same offensive in Mexico, in Venezuela (Latin America: A new offensive by American imperialism, p. 10). Trump’s policy is calling into question all the agreements established after WWII and in which American imperialism was to be a factor of the world imperialist order. Trump has taken note of the end of the world of 1945. The whole of his policy is determined by the exclusive defence of US interests. But this will of protectionism collides with reality, that of the big American groups and trusts and their presence in the world arena – notably in China.

At the same time, this policy of Trump’s further sharpens the world crisis. His decision to call into question the agreement with Iran, to place heavy sanctions on this country, accelerates the crisis in the Middle East. The two pillars of American domination in this region are in crisis: after having re-voted a second time for the legislative elections, the Israeli Parliament finds itself again unable to form a government. Zionism has entered a deep crisis of decomposition. The other pillar, Saudi Arabia, saw its
oil production brutally diminish following the bombardment of its oil installations by Yemeni rebels.

In the newsletter *Connaissance des Energies*, one can read:

One could ask oneself if the recent attack on Saudi Arabian oil installations somewhat translates the end of American engagement (support for the Saudi kingdom — editor’s note) (…). The United States has become the number-one producer, ahead of Saudi Arabia, Russia (…). Some foresee that it could be a net exporter in the near future, thanks to so-called “shale” hydrocarbons (…). The United States wants the Europeans to buy from it a growing portion of gas, oil, highlighting Europe’s dependence on Russian gas and oil from the Middle East. The recent attack on Saudi sites is a good occasion to remind that the European Union should further preoccupy itself with the diversifying its sources of importation. This attack comes at a bad time for Saudi Arabia, which had envisaged opening a part of the capital of its oil corporation, Aramco (…). The international capitals will perhaps be prudent before flooding into the Gulf, and the value of subscription will perhaps not be the same.

These developments come at a time when all the imperialist governments are terrorised by the threat of a coming sizeable financial crisis in a world market that is already on the path of dislocation. A September 2019 report from the OCDE underlines that “the protectionist tensions, the American trade wars, the Brexit and the price of oil aggravate the uncertainties”. (see below “The dislocation of the world market”, p. 35)

The second source of terror for these governments is that of the surge of mass movements, like that in Algeria. In all countries, as the articles on Europe and Latin America point out, the resistance of the workers and the labouring population is developing. One also notes the place of the union organisations, threatened by the submission of their leaderships to the demands of imperialism. Within the labour movement and the union organisations, but also in the political field, a search is expressed, a will to fight: in short, a true re-composition is underway.

The campaign for the release of Louisa Hanoune is being led in 93 countries. Obviously, it bears witness to the strength of international solidarity in the field of democracy. But the fact that Louisa Hanoune is the general secretary of a political party that fights imperialism and that she herself is a member of the Coordination of the International Liaison Committee of workers and peoples has a directly political resonance. This is the search, in these 93 countries, on all continents, for a will to fight against imperialism, a will to defend the workers and threatened national sovereignty. And on this basis, the will to seek to create ties, on the international scale, with others who lead the same fight. It is the will of these activists and workers to establish ties on the international level allowing for free debate and common action. It is in these conditions that the second meeting of the International Committee of Liaison and Exchanges, which will be held 28, 29 and 30 November, must be understood. In the second letter convening this meeting, one can read:

“The G7, which on August 23 brought together in the seaside city of Biarritz nearly all the heads of state of the big so-called democratic powers, provided a striking picture of the political dead-end into which the whole system of imperialist domination is sinking, dragging all peoples behind it into chaos.

There we saw the ‘big players of this world’ congratulate themselves in an indecent stage-managed event before the international media in an attempt to mask the panic with which they are all gripped, faced with the first signs of the inexorable approaching collapse of the whole world financial system.

We saw Trump blow hot and cold in the trade war that he has opened against China, with all its consequences for world trade...

We saw the European leaders, particularly the French, present themselves as “mediators” to Trump in the most threatening of conflicts, as if their Europe had the means to weigh against Trump… (…)

All this while, a few paces away, in the Mediterranean sea, hundreds of men, women and children, driven from their lands by war and privation provoked by the pillage organized by the big imperialist trusts and the states at their service, see all borders close against them, one after another, as was the case for the hundreds of thousands who preceded them these last years, and as is the case for the hundreds of thousands blocked in North America, on the border between Mexico and the United States, or in Asia on the borders with India, or in the very heart of the African continent… (…)”

In our invitation of July 5 we wrote: “On all continents and in every country, the workers and peoples are seeking the ways and means of defending themselves,” and we referred to the developing revolution in Algeria, the resistance in France, in Brazil, in Hong Kong…

The Algerian revolution has not weakened by an inch despite the repression, arousing the admiration of all the peoples who remember the heroic and victorious combat of the Algerian people for their independence.

In Europe, the multiform resistance of the workers and peoples against the structural adjustment plans dictated by the EU and faithfully implemented by all the European governments, is at the origin of the unprecedented political crisis which is tearing apart all the institutional parties and undermining the existence of the EU and all the governments in place.

The crisis which is shaking Great Britain illustrates the decline of the old European imperialist powers. The political system which for centuries was a “model” of parliamentary democracy is in its death-throes.

In Latin America, the peoples are facing up to the policies of permanent aggression provoked by US imperialism. In Brazil and Venezuela, Argentina and Mexico, the resistance of the workers and peoples is broadening and deepening.

In Africa, the dogged mobilization of the workers and their organizations for the defence of workers rights, for the defence of labour laws against increasing deregulation and precariousness, for the right to strike... are gradually spreading to all countries of the continent against the armed
intervention of imperialist states and against the presence of French and American military bases on the territory of different African states.

Finally, we referred to Hong Kong in our first invitation. In Hong Kong, the popular uprising has just won the abrogation by the city-state and by the Chinese bureaucracy of the law of extradition to China. They won the abrogation of a law which threatened all liberties, chief among them being the right to independent organization of workers’ trade unions. Their mobilization was passionately followed by all the militants in China who are fighting for the construction of truly independent trade unions. (…)

But at a time when whole swaths of the world market are coming apart, victim of the fundamental contradictions of a system based upon private ownership of the means of production, dragging whole peoples into chaos, privation and war;

At a time of crisis (and collapse for some) of the big parties, the big organizations which have for decades in our different countries and on our different continents spoken in the name of the workers and peoples, while at the same time linking their fate to maintenance of the imperialist order;

At a time when fresh forces are seeking to emerge from this crisis and the paralysis in which the old leaderships seek to confine them;

It has appeared vital to us to open up a space for exchanges allowing militants of all political and trade union origins and diverse traditions, engaged in different struggles which today are the first symptoms of a wave of revolutionary uprisings that are getting ready to sweep across the heart of the imperialist countries, as well as the countries dominated by imperialism;

it has appeared vital to us to create a space for exchange with the aim of restoring a link allowing us to place the developments under way in each of our countries within an overall picture of the developments of the class struggle at the international level and to broach this debate in the most open manner possible.

This is an essential condition for success in each of our countries in strengthening the confidence of militants and workers who need to place their fight within an overall view of the global confrontation which is under way.

This is the way of practically reconstructing the links of international solidarity, as we have done with the campaign for the release of Louisa Hanoune.

There you have, dear Comrades, the reasons of our invitation. The follow-up, we hope to define it together.

The Coordination of the International Liaison Committee of Workers and Peoples

Lucien Gauthier,
23 September 2019

Last minute (25 September): As we put the finishing touches on this issue, we have learned that the military tribunal has condemned Louisa Hanoune to 15 years of hard prison.

Her lawyers denounce a political trial and appeal the decision.